

The Honorable James Eagen

Chief Administrative Officer of the
House

Opening Statement

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I am pleased to appear before you to discuss "The IT Assessment: A Ten-Year Vision for Technology in the House" and provide the perspectives of the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). The CAO was pleased to participate in the development of the House IT Assessment and is supportive of many of the recommendations and observations in the report.

History of Change

To begin, I believe it is important to place the recommendations made in the report into the context of the broader history of the development of information technology (IT) in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The past 20 years have seen a significant change in technology and its use in the House. As an employee of the House for nearly 25 years, I have witnessed the changing role of IT firsthand. I have seen the evolution of technology from typewriters to laptops and from obtrusive, large word processors, to ubiquitous, handheld personal digital assistants (PDAs).

I first arrived on Capitol Hill in the early 1980s and at the time, technology was already in its early stages of development. House Information Services (HIS) was created in the 1970s and had begun work on building the infrastructure for the early networking of computers. By 1978, the House began training for word processors such as Wang. Other developments in the 1980s included the introduction of local area networks (LANs) and Correspondence Management Systems (CMS).

In the

1990s, House IT was enhanced in part by the creation of the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer. Much of the IT management of the House was centralized into the CAO. During the 1990s, the first leaps were taken in moving from a primarily paper-based operation to becoming increasingly electronic. The House deployed access to the Internet for the first time in the 1990s, and the financial management of the House budget was migrated into an electronic form. The widespread deployment of personal computers also occurred. It was during this decade that the use of e-mail began to significantly reshape the institution in fundamental ways, in terms of communicating both within the House and with constituents.

More

recently, House IT was clearly shaped by the events of 2001, the tragic events of both 9-11 and the anthrax incident. The years since 9-11 have seen a greater emphasis on more mobile communications and on a need to be able to work anywhere, anytime. This is true in both normal daily operations and in emergencies that may arise, whether in Washington or in District offices. We witnessed this firsthand as the CAO provided support to District offices impacted by Katrina and other hurricanes during 2005.

These

events have led to developments such as the Alternate Computing Facility (ACF), issuance of satellite phones and SecurIDs, and Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) that allow confidential, secure access to the House networks from remote locations. All these technological developments enable the Members to conduct crucial House business anywhere, anytime.

The past

20 years serve to help us shape the next 10, and the House IT Assessment is an informing body of work as the CAO and the broader House look to the future.

House IT Assessment

In developing the House IT Assessment, the CAO was pleased to partner with the Committee on House Administration (CHA) and the contracted support provided by Gartner and the Congressional Management Foundation.

CAO staff were closely involved in many aspects of the project. CAO staff provided input to the process by participating in workshops and providing comments to the series of documents developed as a result.

I personally believe the process of receiving input from our customers and stakeholders was critically important. I would like to extend my thanks to the many Members and staff who personally contributed their time to participate in workshops and provide input.

The bipartisan and cross-cutting input from across the House community contributed to a useful series of recommendations. The CAO was pleased to be an active participant in developing the vision for the House and we look forward to working with the Committee to deliver on the recommendations of the House IT Assessment.

Future of Technology in the House

In reviewing the vision and the road map that has been provided through this study, it is essential to understand that fundamentally, the House needs to make business decisions about how it sees itself operating in the future. Yes, the study is labeled an IT assessment, but not for IT's sake. Investment in technology needs to be driven by business need, and I think that is where this study provides a great service to the House as an institution. The study attempts to look into the future and present key business decisions that can now, and in the future, be enabled by technology. But the business decisions must come first.

I would

like to focus on three of the five key areas mentioned in the 10-Year Road Map for Technology in the House of Representatives. Specifically I would like to address recommendations for the Commodity and New Enterprise Shared Services, Mobile Member Capabilities, and IT Decision-Making. It is in these areas where the CAO is already focusing much of its efforts in information technology. In fact, the CAO has already developed an IT strategic plan that aligns both to our CAO Balanced Scorecard objectives and to many of the recommendations in the 10-Year Road Map.

Commodity and New Enterprise Shared Services

The first key area is "Commodity and New Enterprise Shared Services." As noted in the 10-Year Road Map, "Currently, each House office independently acquires hardware, software, staff and vendors to support its operations, with some exceptions (e.g., anti-virus, central networks, e-mail, etc.). This provides offices with the flexibility to choose what works best for them, but it also requires that each devote significant effort and resources to managing technical matters."

The 10-Year Road Map recommends that "commodity technologies, capabilities, and services would be identified and provided centrally to save offices from having to acquire them individually; to reduce costs to the institution, overall; and to support offices in performing as effectively as possible." The CAO supports this vision of the future.

In fact, the CAO has already begun to pilot a similar idea, known as Seat Management, within our own organization. This project has centralized management of the CAO employees' desktops to an outside vendor, meaning that the lifecycle management and replacement of personal computing equipment would be handled by an outside vendor seamlessly integrated with the CAO technical support staff. This program has allowed CAO staff resources to be reallocated to become more proactive solution providers. We believe Seat Management will increase efficiencies and improve service in the long term.

We believe that centralizing support, while still providing choice, is an important balancing act. We are committed to working with the Committee to see that such a vision is built in the coming years.

Mobile Member

The second area of focus is "Mobile Member." In our CAO Balanced Scorecard, one of the core themes is delivering support "anywhere, anytime." The 10-Year Road Map notes that "... in the future, however, the House would initiate technology projects targeted specifically to Members, particularly focusing on technologies, capabilities, and services to help facilitate Members' work when they are out of their offices or traveling in their Districts."

We support this vision, and again, are already hard at work to make this a reality. We currently have 4,480 active SecurIDs in the House. SecurIDs in combination with technologies such as "air cards" issued by mobile providers are allowing both staff and Members to securely access their House networks remotely anywhere, anytime. We also support more than 7,000 BlackBerry devices across the House, allowing Members and staff to be able to access e-mail, documents, and the Internet from anywhere, anytime.

We recognize that more work is ahead of us, as Members and their staffs become more mobile. Our CAO Strategic Technology Plan has already been developed, with the key tenet being the need to support mobile staffs and Members. We look forward to working with the House community to further implement this recommendation.

IT Decision-Making Flow

Foundational to the ability of the House to implement many of the recommendations of the House IT Assessment are the recommendations regarding the "IT Decision-Making Flow." The many innovations recommended in the 10-Year Road Map will require a coordinated and collective vision that includes processes and procedures to improve decision-making with regard to House IT.

As noted in the 10-Year Road Map, "In the House, technology planning, budgeting, and decision-making is conducted by each organization independently. Each office provides technologies and services to fulfill its role. There is currently no organization with authority for institutional technology planning, nor is there a process for coordinating, at an institutional level, decisions that impact the entire institution or establishing technology priorities for the House, as a whole."

The CAO has already begun operating under a centralized, coordinated model with the development of the CAO Technology Strategic Plan, our Capital Investment Planning and Control Strategy, and the establishment of our Portfolio Management Office. This oversight and strategic planning allows us to look to the future and align our resource planning accordingly. We are also establishing these plans and oversight procedures to ensure that once we have committed the resources to delivering solutions, they are delivered as cost effectively and efficiently as possible.

The CAO believes developing such programs for the House could be a critical aspect of delivering on the House 10-Year IT Vision. We support establishing a structure to coordinate institutional technology decisions in a way that effectively involves stakeholders throughout the process.

It is the establishment of this "IT Decision-Making Flow" that I believe is the key vision to come out of the House IT Assessment. We look forward to continuing to work with the Committee and further exploring how such processes and procedures can be established.

Closing Remarks

In closing, the House IT Assessment is a positive step forward in helping shape the House of the future. For the past 10 years, the CAO has played a significant role in delivering solutions to the House that have helped our customers evolve with the ever-changing demands of their jobs and their constituents. While the last 20 years have been witness to significant evolutionary - and sometimes revolutionary - change, I believe that the next 10 will bring as much, if not more, dramatic change to the House and to the nation. We already are taking action both to deliver this change and prepare

for future innovation.

Thank
you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to address the Committee today. We look forward to working with the Committee to deliver on the recommendations of the House IT assessment. I am pleased to answer any questions you may have.